

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the Abstract beginning at page 63, line 2, with the following rewritten paragraph:

A processing method and apparatus for removing a native oxide film from the surface of a subject to be treated, wherein plasma is generated from N_2 and H_2 gases and then activated to form an activated gas species, NF_3 gas is added to the activated gas species to generate an activated gas of these three gases, the subject is cooled to not higher than a predetermined temperature by a cooling means, gas generated from the N_2 , H_2 and NF_3 gases is reacted with the surface of the subject to degenerate the native oxide film into a reactive film, the reactive film is sublimated and thus the native oxide film is removed if the subject is heated to a given temperature; a cluster system which includes the above apparatus and other apparatuses and which is capable of carrying a subject to be treated in an unreactive atmosphere.